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THE EFFECTS OF ROUMANIA'S DECISION

BY SYDNEY BROOKS

ROUMANIA'S entrance into the war has been described as a turning point. It is not perhaps quite that. The Battle of the Marne was a genuine turning point. It marked the end of the German offensive in the West, the collapse of their original plan of campaign on that front, and the beginning of the siege warfare which has continued ever since. So, too, was the Teutonic failure of a year ago to reach a decision in the East, that is, to capture or destroy the Russian armies or to so exhaust or demoralize Russia as to render her incapable of further action on a great scale. The Battle of Jutland on the other hand was not a turning point. It merely confirmed that supremacy at sea which from the opening of the war has been the basis of all that the Allies have done or attempted. Neither was the British withdrawal from the Dardanelles nor the overrunning of Serbia and Montenegro nor Bulgaria's intervention. The reactions of each and all of those developments are being nullified beneath our eyes at this very moment. In their ultimate significance the historian of the war may attach greater importance to the Austrian failure of last May to break the Italian front and to the German failure to reach Verdun. He will say of these two ventures that they were the desperate sorties of a beleaguered garrison and that their defeat settled the question of the capacity of the encircling lines to hold firm. And he will assuredly give an even higher place in his strategical, his political and his moral valuation of the campaigns of 1916 to the Russian swoop upon Galicia, the forcing by the Italians of the Isonzo front and the Anglo-French offensive on the Somme. Almost simultaneously the Central Powers have shown that they cannot escape from the net that encompasses them, and the Allies have shown that they can draw that net still closer. And so far as it is

possible to foresee, and even remembering that war is of all human activities the most uncertain, those conditions are permanent and irreversible. The inability of the Central Powers to break out can from now onwards only decrease as the ability of the Allies to break in increases. It is to the demonstration of that momentous fact that the intervention of Roumania is to be ascribed. In other words, it is a sequel rather than a turning point, a consequence of already established conditions and their proof, but not their cause. It underscores with palpable, dramatic and resounding abruptness a result that to the military student had ceased to be in doubt. The Allies are not going to win because Roumania has thrown in her lot with them. On the contrary, Roumania threw in her lot with them because she had convinced herself that they were going to win. Her entrance must hasten and make yet more assured the triumph of the Allies, but its foundations were already well and truly laid. Americans may find a tolerably close parallel in their own political experience. Roumania's part has been exactly that of the cool and locally influential politician who suddenly elects to climb onto the band wagon of a Presidential candidate whose certainty of success, while visible to his expert eyes, is still partially veiled from the multitude and is only universally accepted when he thus publicly stakes his political life upon it.

Roumania herself is one of the shrewdest, most cautious and most aspiring States to be found in Europe. To her late king she owes as much as any nation has ever owed to a single man. Thanks above all to his energy and judgment, the revenues of Roumania in the past three and a half decades have more than quadrupled, her population has risen from five to seven and a half millions, her army has become a powerful and well equipped force, capable of maintaining fully twenty divisions in the field for many months to come; her foreign commerce has expanded until it now amounts to more than \$250,000,000 a year, her budgets for the past ten years have yielded unbroken surpluses, her national debt of some \$350,000,000, raised without any special guarantees, has been mainly used on reproductive enterprises, such as railways, forests, oil fields and salt mines, and her systematic policy of internal development has been reflected not only in the prosperity of her finances but in the general confidence that she would neither make

herself, nor allow others to use her as an instrument of aggression. No State carved out of the Ottoman Empire has more completely justified its liberation and autonomy.

Not that Roumania has not some problems and difficulties of her own. She has three very big ones, a land question, a political, electoral and constitutional question, and a Jewish question. When the war broke out she was at last under the leadership of M. Jonescu, one of the ablest statesmen in Europe, on the point of grappling with all three issues. Roumania is a peasant country, about the size of Alabama, ruled by an oligarchy. Eighty per cent. of her people look to the land for a living and have indeed no other source of subsistence. Yet of the total cultivable area nearly one-half is owned by less than five thousand nobles, who despise commerce, are almost all in debt, form perhaps the most *harum-scarum* aristocracy in Europe, and for the most part farm their estates to Jewish bailiffs who mercilessly squeeze the peasant of his uttermost cent. Hence on the one hand occasional peasant risings, like the *jacquerie* of 1907, and on the other a sustained fury of anti-Semitism such as is not surpassed even in Russia. The mass of the people plow, sow and reap, but rarely earn enough to provide a competence, have no political power, and are deprived of any chance of becoming independent proprietors. Landed property in Roumania can only be expropriated by the State in three specific cases—for military purposes, for railways and for reasons of public health; and the first beginnings of any real electoral reform would seem to be the passing of a Constitutional amendment permitting the Government to compel the breaking up of the large estates and their redistribution among the masses. As electors the peasants have virtually no political influence whatever and one of the great questions before the war was whether it would be safe to grant such of them as could read and write a direct vote. The Jewish question is less a religious than an economic question. It is the outcry, on one side, of the peasant who finds himself driven to the wall by Jewish dealers, middlemen and bailiffs, men who are not Roumanians in tradition, thought, feeling or by fusion. And on the other side it is the outcry of the Jews themselves who are forbidden to own land and whose rights as citizens, if they have any, do not descend to their children.

But though Roumania is far from having solved either

her political or her agrarian or her Jewish question, in other directions, and particularly in the nationalization and development of her railways and forests and her deposits of salt and oil, her national well-being has been carefully supervised. And beyond all this her own history has taught her the truth of the Bismarckian dictum that small States which push themselves into questions that should be settled by the Great Powers, or which invite the assistance of a Great Power to attain some end of their own, generally have to pay heavily for their rashness. It has been impossible for her to forget the singularly high-handed, ungrateful and treacherous fashion in which Russia deprived her of Bessarabia after the Russo-Turkish war of 1878. In that struggle Roumania took part very much in the same spirit and with the same expectations as Sardinia under Cavour's prescient leadership entered the Crimean War. She was shamefully repaid. Although her troops saved the honor of Russian arms at Plevna and did much to decide the issue, her only reward was to be despoiled of Bessarabia with its Roumanian population of nearly 1,000,000. Russia suffered for a crime that was also a blunder by finding her influence in the Balkans all but paralyzed for decades. But Roumania sustained a double loss. She lost Bessarabia; she became necessarily anti-Russian and pro-Austrian in her sympathies; and in doing so she forfeited whatever chance there was of securing better treatment for the 3,000,000 Roumanians who inhabit Transylvania under the rule of the Hapsburgs.

The lesson bit deep and Roumania's foreign policy ever since has been circumspection itself. Though from time to time at odds with both Greece and Bulgaria over the varying aspects of the old Macedonian question, her general influence and conduct throughout the entire field of Balkan and Southeastern politics have been of an eminently pacific and steady character. She has never been the one to stir up trouble among her neighbors. Only once since her independence was recognized by the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 has she sought territorial aggrandizement. When she joined the Triple Alliance in 1883 it was with the sincere desire to promote the equilibrium of Southeastern Europe and with no intention at all of allowing herself to be exploited either by Vienna or Berlin. One does not usually look for historical accuracy in the manifestoes with which governments

accompany and seek to justify their declarations of war. But in the admirably dignified and pointed document which was issued at Bucharest on August 27, the Roumanian Government said nothing that was not literally true. "Devoted to the work of her internal reconstruction, and faithful to her firm resolution to remain, in the Lower Danube, an element of order and of equilibrium, Roumania has not ceased to contribute to the maintenance of peace in the Balkans." Can anyone dispute it? or can anyone deny the damning force of her indictment that the spirit of the Triple Alliance had been changed from one of force to one of naked conquest? Twice out of the mouths of their own partners, first by Italy and now by Roumania, have the Central Powers been convicted of having planned and provoked the war which they pretend was thrust upon them. Consider this sentence in the Roumanian proclamation: "Instead of a group of States seeking by common effort to work in agreement to assure peace and the maintenance of the situations created by Treaties, Roumania found herself in presence of Powers making war with the very object of transforming from top to bottom the old arrangements which had served as a basis for their Treaty of Alliance." Or ponder this further and even more vigorous pronouncement: "The work of peace which Roumania, faithful to the spirit of the Triple Alliance, had endeavored to accomplish, has thus been rendered fruitless by those very Powers who were called upon to support and defend it." What is left after this of the legend of German innocence and of the preposterous pretense that the Central Powers are waging a war of self-defense?

To develop such internal strength as would enable her to maintain her hard-won freedom from Turkish rule and safeguard her strictly national rights and interests—this, hitherto, has been the chief aim of Roumania's policy. One might imagine that something of the prudential optimism as well as the valor of the fighters and rulers who under Trajan formed the Roumanian States survives in her people still. History has tested and purified them. For centuries they were the chief bulwark of Christianity and European civilization against the Turks and the Tartars; and today, a virtually homogeneous nationality, girdled around by other Roumanian communities and thus to some extent protected against the direct pressure of hostile Powers, they occupy

politically, commercially and geographically a position of peculiar strength. Roumania, indeed, has never regarded herself as a Balkan State but rather as the most easterly of the Powers of Europe. As the principal granary of Central Europe, the master of the mouth of the Danube and the sole and efficient policeman of its lower reaches, and lying across the route that links Europe with Asia Minor, her interests have taken a wider sweep than those of the small kingdoms beyond her southern frontiers; and she has consistently sought to win the confidence and good will of Europe rather than to become engulfed in the agitations of Balkan politics. She displayed, it is true, an occasional interest in the fortunes of some of the peoples of Macedonia and Epirus whom she asserted to be Roumanians while Athens claimed them as Greeks; but there was never at any time any very serious purpose behind her fitful propaganda. Her exceedingly calculating policy was well shown during the Balkan wars of 1913. She remained neutral while Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia attacked Turkey and afterwards while they attacked one another; and then, when Bulgaria was thoroughly exhausted, she presented with pistolling peremptoriness a demand for territorial compensation, and enforced it. It was a cold-blooded, ruthless, profitable proceeding that Bismarck himself could hardly have bettered.

Roumania's interests in the present struggle are two-fold. In the first place she is anxious not to remain stationary while any of her neighbors, and particularly Bulgaria, adds to its power and territories. A Greater Bulgaria such as for a moment seemed possible and is now forever out of the question, fastened on Roumania's flanks, would be a persistent and intolerable menace to her security. A Greater Serbia emerging from the triumph of the Allies and in close sympathy with Russia might be almost as inconvenient if Russo-Roumanian relations were still strained and if Roumania were no larger and had no more power and authority than today. Nor could the truth of what Venizelos saw and proclaimed eighteen months ago have escaped the sharp eyes of the statesmen of Bucharest—namely, that a German victory would be the death-blow to the free life of the Balkan States. Roumania, therefore, was vitally concerned in preventing any change in the *status quo* that she did not herself share in and benefit by. She could not help perceiving that the changes that were certain

to follow on a Teutonic victory and the aggrandizement of Bulgaria would be peculiarly fatal to her own development; and she had only to carry the argument one step further to be aware that her interests lay in siding with the Allies. But not in siding with them quixotically, at any cost, against overweighted odds. That is not the Roumanian way. Very sensibly the Government of Bucharest waited until the balance of victory had begun definitely to incline towards the Allies and when all possibility that Roumania might duplicate the experience of Poland, Belgium and Serbia, had passed. Then, with her preparations all complete, she struck.

Probably she would have struck in any case the moment the defeat of the Central Powers had become, humanly speaking, inevitable. But Roumania was urged to a belligerent activity by a racial as well as a political motive, by the promptings of sentiment as well as of self-interest. In her kinsfolk just beyond her borders she finds a cause that links policy with passion. Of the "unredeemed" Roumanians there are, as I have said, 1,000,000 in Bessarabia under Russian rule and 3,000,000 in Transylvania under the rule of the Hungarian Magyars. I do not know whether the terms that have been agreed upon between the Allies and Roumania include the retrocession to her of either the whole or part of Bessarabia. But there can be no question that that act of reparation is justly due to her and that the light which Russia has recently seen on the general subject of local self-government and the reunion of scattered nationalities—witness her memorable pledge to resurrect the ancient State of Poland—makes the necessary renunciation not unthinkable. It is, however, on Transylvania, where 3,000,000 Roumanians are chafed and embittered by the persistent ill-treatment they suffer at the hands of the Magyars, that the eyes of Bucharest are chiefly fixed. It is only very recently, a matter of the last decade or so, that we of Western Europe have come to see the Magyars as they really are. Our fathers regarded them as the victims of Austrian tyranny. They knew nothing of the tyranny they exercised themselves over the races within their borders. But of late years a pitiless publicity has beaten upon the Magyars and the disguise of liberalism and romance with which they deluded the world for half a century, has been pretty effectually penetrated. A dashing, proud and virile people,

with a thousand years of self-contained history behind them, the Magyars are politically, and especially in their dealings with their alien fellow-subjects, one of the most stupid and ruthless oligarchies that has ever lorded it on the soil of Europe. Indeed we miss something of the significance of this war in thinking and talking of it as an Austro-German war. It is far more a Magyar-German war—and the Magyars, one may add, in the brutality of their intolerance and conceit, are well mated with their Prussian Allies.

There is probably—I say “probably” because the Magyars have a habit of cooking the census returns in their own interests—one Roumanian in Hungary to every two or two and a half Magyars. Yet in the Hungarian Parliament there are only 5 Roumanian representatives to 404 Magyars. Legislation is a Magyar monopoly; there are 13 Magyar pupils in the classical and intermediate schools for every single Roumanian, and over 10,000 Magyar students in the universities and less than 470 Roumanians; in the other educational establishments Magyars predominate in the ratio of from 10 to 1 to 200 to 1; it is clearly, and indeed avowedly, the policy of the ruling race to keep the Roumanians in a state of intellectual degradation and so exclude them from the professions and the ranks of officialdom. Even in the districts where 90 per cent of the inhabitants are Roumanians Magyar is the only language allowed in the law courts, the local government offices and in public notices and proclamations. The higher officials, the judges, the lawyers and the jurymen are practically all Magyars. Electoral districts have been gerrymandered to preserve Magyar supremacy which is further buttressed by the system of *viva voce* voting before a Magyar official. Little, indeed, has been left untried to stamp out in the Roumanians of Hungary all sense of nationality. To all the Roumanians of Roumania, therefore, it is inevitable that the rescue of their kinsmen from the clutches of the Magyars should be a supreme ambition. Roumania stands to Transylvania in precisely the same relation as Italy to the Trentino and Trieste. But in this war of giants there never was any chance that Roumania would be able to repeat the stroke she practised three years ago at the expense of Bulgaria. If she wished to annex Transylvania and incorporate into the Roumanian Kingdom the 3,000,000 Roumanians now under Magyar rule, it was clear from the first that she could not achieve her

end by presenting a bill of claims when the war was over and demanding compensation. She could only achieve it by taking up arms where her services would be really useful to the Allied cause and before the ultimate destiny of Transylvania had been settled by events in which she had no hand. Those are the stern conditions of the stern times in which we live and Roumania has had the courage and sense to face and accept them. She has bided her time, has waited till her stock of munitions could be brought level with the requirements of the war and till her army could operate in immediate conjunction with the left wing of the Russian forces; and now she has taken the step that had to be taken if the 12,000,000 Roumanians in the Southeast of Europe are ever to be united in a single State.

The value of her adhesion to the cause of the Allies lies on the very face of things. In point of numbers it reinforces the Russian troops that are operating between the Pinsk marshes and the Danube by all but a third—and this at a time when a sorely battered enemy is trenching on the last million of his reserves. It adds some 350 miles to the battle line—and this at a time when all the resources of the Central Powers are stretched to their uttermost to hold their present positions and when except in the West they cannot shorten their lines by a retreat. It throws from fifteen to twenty divisions of fresh effectives, led by trained and mature officers, against the enemy's exposed flank and so renders impossible any such diversion as was employed fifteen months ago to arrest the Russian advance upon the Carpathians—and it does this at a time when Austria-Hungary, reeling under the blows of Italy and Russia, has spent her vitality and is visibly, amid a tumult of distraction and despair, nearing the point of exhaustion. Nor are its effects likely to be of less moment in the Balkan theater. The intervention of Roumania shatters at a blow the dream of a Greater Bulgaria and ruins all the hopes and calculations on the strength of which King Ferdinand was induced to enter the struggle. It encloses the "Old Fox" in a trap of steel. It opens a route by which the Russians can pour into Bulgaria there to chastise with a heavy hand the renegade Slavs of Sofia. The Allied troops—British, French, Italian, Russian and Serbian—that are now based on Salonica are certainly powerful enough in themselves to contain, and probably to conquer, the Bulgarian forces opposed to them. But they

are now immensely strengthened for all the purposes of their local objective by the help which Roumania or Russia or both can extend to them from the north. The position of Bulgaria is indeed so hopeless that any day may bring the news that she has thrown up the sponge. Whether she does so or not, whether she submits tomorrow or a few weeks hence, matters very little. She has shot her bolt and the days of her usefulness to the Central Powers are numbered. They will leave her to her fate.

But it is after all on Germany that Roumania's decision must react with the most perturbing consequences. Ever since the war began the Central Powers have drawn heavily on the Roumanian stock of corn, cattle, horses, oil and fuel. That avenue of supply is now closed to them. One more gap in the blockade is filled up and the silent disorganizing pressure which the British Navy maintains upon the very vitals of Germany is to that extent increased. But the sharpest and most palpable demonstration of the scope and efficacy of Roumanian intervention will come when the line from Berlin to Constantinople is severed, and with it the last means of communication between Germany and her hapless Bulgarian and Turkish dupes. When that happens it will be an event the importance of which from any standpoint, moral, military or material, can hardly be placed too high; and undoubtedly Roumania's entrance into the war brings it very much nearer. It is very difficult to do more than guess at the inner workings of either the official or the popular mind in Germany just now. But there are good grounds for thinking that the source of much of Germany's confidence in victory is the conviction that she has won for herself by this war a position of unassailable security in the Near East. The proof of that achievement is the Balkan Express which runs twice a week from Antwerp to Constantinople. To all Germans it is the symbol of the Greater Germany that will remain when the war is over, the Greater Germany that is to stretch through the Balkans, to dominate Turkey and convert her Asiatic possessions into a reservoir whence wheat and cotton and oil and metals may flow perpetually into the Fatherland, the Greater Germany which, controlling the Danube from source to mouth and linked up with it by a great development of inland waterways, is to expand right up to the Persian Gulf and constitute so compact and formidable an economic preserve as to be invul-

nerable to any assault of sea-power. That is the dream that drifts ceaselessly through the German political consciousness, and to make it a reality, to secure the mastery of the highway to the East and with it the reversionary interest in Turkey's Asiatic dominions, there are probably few European sacrifices that the Wilhelmstrasse would not gladly concede. A peace which obliged Germany to evacuate Belgium, Poland and Alsace-Lorraine but which left her in a position to found a yet greater Empire in the Near East would be a peace wholly agreeable to German sentiment. In the past two decades the ambition to rule, directly or indirectly, a single Federation of States from Hamburg to the Persian Gulf has taken an extraordinarily strong hold on the German people. What is more, they believe they have now gone three-fourths of the way towards realizing it; and so long as express trains are regularly running from Antwerp to Constantinople, through the capitals and territories of one vassal State after another, their belief has an air of something more than plausibility. Destroy that belief, capture, cut and hold the line that leads to the empire of their visions, separate them at a stroke from their Allies in Turkey and Bulgaria, bring the whole pack of cards tumbling upon their heads, and you administer to the German people a shock second only in magnitude and disintegrating effects to an incontestable disaster in the field. From the days when the Allies, thanks above all to the prescience and determination of M. Briand, made up their minds to hold on to Salonica, the ultimate rupture of communications between Germany and Bulgaria and Turkey has steadily mounted from a possibility to a certainty. But the adhesion of Roumania both simplifies the task and hastens it. And when it is accomplished the question whether the predominant influence in the Balkans is to be Slav or Teuton will virtually be settled, Turkey's doom will have been pronounced, and the German people will begin at last to see the handwriting on the wall.

The Allies, then, stand to gain much from Roumania's action besides the testimony to their final triumph which her sagacious statesmanship has furnished, besides the moral endorsement of their aims and spirit which is implied in her participation in the war. And the Central Powers and their victims have lost or stand to lose as much or even more. Upon Germany it came as a staggering climax to the

failures before Verdun and in the Trentino. The world saw its effect at once in the dismissal of General von Falkenhayn and the swift summoning of Marshal von Hindenburg with a plain mission to offset by the magic of his popularity the depressing results of the military "readjustments" which the new situation imposes upon the German Staff. To Austria-Hungary, already demoralized to the point of collapse, the fresh menace from Roumania flew hardly less than a signal of irretrievable ruin. Turkey, repulsed in Egypt, ousted from Armenia, losing if she has not already lost the leadership of the Moslem world, has long since outgrown the exhilaration of her successes at Kut and in the Dardanelles, and now faces with what cheerfulness she may the assured prospect that before very long she will have received her last gun, her last rifle, her last shell, from Germany and will have to fight alone and unaided against a narrowing ring of superior foes. Whatever hope the Bulgarian rulers cherished that they might after all escape the penalties of their treachery and misjudgment was gone when Roumania entered the lists. And to the sole neutral State in South Eastern Europe, to Greece faction-ridden, bewildered, capable of heroic impulses but so long prevented from realizing them in action, Roumania's intervention has supplied the supreme test, the final opportunity. It is no longer a matter of great military solicitude to the Allies whether Greece rises above the morass of fears and divided counsels and pitiable hesitations that for the past two years has all but engulfed her. But there are a hundred reasons of sentiment, of political affinity, of international propriety, and of sympathy with the Greater Greece that might and should emerge from this war, why they should wish to see the differences between King Constantine and M. Venizelos composed and the two leaders who together have done so much for Greece in the past and may do still more in the future working in harmony towards ends that neither can attain alone.

Let me close as I began with the reminder that Roumania's intervention, powerfully as it reinforces the Allies, is to be considered rather as a symbol and consequence than as a cause of the many changes that had already passed upon the Central Powers the verdict of ultimate and inevitable defeat. It is none the less welcome on that account. From the standpoint of the Allies it carries with it, indeed,

only one and that a small and temporary possibility of mischief. Coming when all expert and civilian opinion in the Allied nations had just reached a definite conviction of victory, there is a bare chance that it may encourage too sanguine anticipations of an early peace and may even mislead neutrals into thinking that the hour for mediation is at any rate dawning. Only disappointment lies in wait for those who hold such views. Germany is still very far from **being broken**. It will be a long and bloody business before the Allies can impose upon her the terms that will alone satisfy them. But Roumania's action is one more token that it can be done and will be done.

SYDNEY BROOKS.